

Message Text

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EXDIS GENEVA FOR AMB YOUNG FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEHRAN 6557 ACTION SECSTATE DATED JUL 10:

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EXDIS

FROM UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM

EO 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, IR

SUBJ: THE SHAH ON LIBERALIZATION

SUMMARY: SHAH BEGAN INTERNAL POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION TWO YEARS AGO IN ORDER TO GET IRAN ON THE WESTERN PATH BEFORE HIS SON TAKE OVER. CHOICE WAS BETWEEN LIBERALIZATION OR TOTAL CONTROL. PROCESS OF LIBERALIZATION WILL CONTINUE WITHIN THE LAW, THOUGH SOME BELIEVE HE HAS GONE TOO FAR. EVEN THOUGH RESURGENCE PARTY NOW HAS THREE WINGS, SHAH EXPECTS NON-PARTY CANDIDATES WOULD RUN IN 1979 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. HE CONFIRMED THAT THEIR VOTES WOULD BE COUNTED, AND SUGGESTED THIS WAS GOOD WAY TO FIND OUT HOW

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STRONG OPPOSITION REALLY IS. HE HOPED NATIONAL FRONT WOULD NOT WIN ANY SEATS BECAUSE "THEY HAVE NO PROGRAM". SHAH REFERRED SCATHINGLY TO RELIGIOUS OPPOSITIONISTS AS "OBSCURANTISTS," BUT GAVE NO HINT OF STEPS HE HAS BEEN TAKING TO WORK OUT DEAL WITH THEM. END SUMMARY

1. AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS TOUR D'HORIZON OF SOVIET

THREAT IN AFRICA, MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA DURING MY AUDIENCE ON JULY 9, THE SHAH TURNED TO THE IRANIAN INTERNAL SCENE. HE SAID THAT ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO HE HAD STARTED THE LIBERALIZATION PROCESS IN IRAN DESPITE THE PROBLEMS AND RISKS INVOLVED. SOME PEOPLE TELL HIM HE HAS GONE TOO FAR BUT IN FACT IRAN HAS LITTLE CHOICE. A HEREDITARY MONARCHY CANNOT KEEP THE LID ON; IRAN HAS THE CHOICE OF FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE FREE WORLD OR THE TIGHT CONTROL EXERCISED BY THE COMMUNIST REGIMES. IRAN WILL, OF COURSE, TAKE THE FORMER DIRECTION AND, HE STRESSED, THE PROCESS WILL CONTINUE. HE SAID THAT HE COULD NOT LEAVE THESE ACTIONS TO HIS HEIR.

2. WITH A SMILE, HE SAID THAT HE HAD EVEN "PLAYED AROUND IN HIS HEAD" WITH THE IDEA OF LEGALIZING THE COUMMUNIST PARTY. BUT, THEN HE REMEMBERED THE BREZHNEV DOCTRINE WHEN A FEW PARTY NONENTITIES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAD INVITED THE SOVIETS INTO THE COUNTRY IN 1968. THAT WAS ENOUGH TO DISABUSE HIM OF HIS MUSING, HE SAID.

3. NOW THE RASTIKHIZ PARTY HAS THREE WINGS; THIS WILL PERMIT CONSIDERABLE GIVE AND TAKE. IF NON-PARTY MEMBERS RUN IN THE NEXT ELECTION (1979), THEIR VOTES WILL BE COUNTED AND, IF THEY SHOULD WIN, SO BE IT. "PERHAPS IT IS BETTER THIS WAY," HE SAID, FOR WE CAN FIND OUT HOW STRONG IN FACT THE OPPOSITION REALLY IS. HE "HOPED" THE NATIONAL FRONTERS--WHO WERE REALLY TRAITORS BECAUSE OF THEIR
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COOPERATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS IN THE EARLY 1950'S-- WOULD NOT WIN ANY SEATS. THEY HAVE NO PROGRAM, HE COMMENTED, AND WONDERED HOW ANY GROUP COULD COMPETE AGAINST THE NINETEEN POINTS OF THE SHAH-PEOPLE REVOLUTION. THEN, HE REPEATED HIS EARLIER PHRASE, "PERHAPS IT IS BETTER THIS WAY." THE NEWSPAPERS ARE ALSO MUCH FREER THAN BEFORE; "THEY ARE NOT AS BAD YET AS YOUR OWN BUT ARE GETTING CLOSE TO IT*"

4. TURNING TO THE RELIGIOUS OPPOSITION, HE WAS FAIRLY SCATHING IN HIS REFERENCES TO THEM AS "OBSCURANTISTS," PEOPLE AGAINST CHANGE AND MODERNIZATION. THEY WANTED TO BIND THE PEOPLE TO THEM FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE SAME IN IRANIAN HISTORY--AND IN FACT IN THE HITORY OF THE WEST SINCE THE INQUISITION. (COMMENT: HE GAVE NO HIN WHATSOEVER OF THE STEPS HE HAS BEEN TAKING TO WORK OUR A MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS).

5. SUMMING UP, HE SAID THAT THE LIBERALIZATION PROCESS, "WITHIN THE LAW," WILL CONTINUE. HOWEVER, IT COULD NOT GO SO FAR AS TO PERMIT SUCH PERSONS AS THE BADER MEINHOF OR RED BRIGADE TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES.

6. COMMENT: THE SHAH APPEARED QUITE RELAXED AND ALMOST
SERENE IN THIS PART OF THE DISCUSSION; HE APPEARS TO BE
OVER HIS EARLIER INDECISION AND SEEMS TO LOOK FORWARD
WITH SOME RELISH TO AMORE OPEN POLITICAL SCENE, EVEN
THOUGH THERE MAY BE MOMENTS WHICH TRY HIS PATIENCE. I
NOTED THAT WE WELCOMED HIS LIBERALIZATION POLICY AND
COMMENDED HIM TO KEEP TO THE PATH HE HAS TAKEN.
NAAS UNQTE
CHRISTOPHER

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